

Power of Play for the Empowerment and Decolonization of Peace Education Learning Communities (POP-ed)

Executive Summary

The purpose of the project is to convene eight TNFSA peace practitioners (e.g., APIF, ALP, and APS fellows) to build a Community of Practice around the intersections of Peace Education, Power of Play, and Critical Hope. We argue that peace education and peacebuilding practices in the Global South need to be decolonized and decentralized and also made less rigid, more relatable, and fun for local learning communities. In this engagement which focuses on SDG 4 and 16, we investigate alternative approaches to learning that are centered around play such as game-based learning, arts-based activism, and film-based storytelling. This approach aspires to critically empower local communities to take ownership of sustainable peace with community-based innovative solutions. Its implementation will be co-organized with community partners connected to the team members, the first of which is in Sri Lanka (DreamSpace Academy).

Our primary outcome will be convening the eight TNFSA fellows as a community of practice to develop a program curriculum on Transforming Peacebuilding for Play-based Learning and Practices which will be complemented with a gamified version of the curriculum in the form of a physical game kit and conduct an implementation workshop in Sri Lanka with a local peacebuilders' community (e.g., proof of concept) and validate its impact. In the long term, we hope to implement the improved curriculum in Cambodia, Indonesia, and Nepal and connect each local community of practice for a larger consortium of peacebuilders who transform the learning process for peacebuilding in the Global South.

Project Period

01 August 2024 - 31 January 2025

Objective

The project aims to achieve three key objectives:

- 1.** Make a significant contribution to the study/practice of decolonizing and decentralizing peace education in the Global South with the knowledge of Global South peacebuilding practitioners.
- 2.** Introducing alternative learning practices centered around the power of play, critical hope, and art-based activism to make education for peacebuilding more fun, relatable, sustainable, and less rigid in Global the South communities.
- 3.** Aspiring collaborations within the TNFSA community to build a global Community of Practice for co-creating Play-based approaches for learning and building peace.

Content

Our conceptual framework draws from the power of play (Elkind, 2008), infinite game theory (Sinek, 2018), and critical hope (Martin, 2018). Applying these theories, the project focuses on co-creating a program curriculum/ learning module to empower peace educators and peacebuilding practitioners in the Global South to empower them to utilize the power of play in their local peacebuilding. This enables the communities to contribute to the exploration of decentralized, non-Eurocentric, and non-Westernized approaches to transform cultures of peace through nurturing communities of care anchored to the Global South.

By utilizing local knowledge of peacebuilding that centers around game-based learning, traditional art forms, stories, music, and creative expression and dialogue from Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Nepal, and Indonesia we will co-create the curriculum that will consolidate different indigenous practices for sustainable peacebuilding. This will also involve the development of a gamified version of the curriculum in the form of a physical game kit which will be a powerful resource for capacity-sharing of this approach with the changemakers of local communities and empower them to think along decentralized, decolonized, sustainable and fun ways of building capacities for peacebuilding.

Through the pilot implementation in Sri Lanka, we hope to empower a community of peace practitioners capable and committed to driving the exploration of the power of play-based peace education. Through this implementation, we will evaluate and validate the curriculum and measure its impact and potential to be adapted to different contexts in the Global South.

Finally, we aim to open these learning resources to the public and invite local implementation partners to engage in applying the power of play-based peace education for the empowerment and decolonization of peace education learning communities.

Output

- 1.**A program curriculum/ learning module on transforming communities of peacebuilding through the Power of Play for decentralizing and decolonizing peace education
- 2.**A gamified version of the curriculum in the form of a physical game kit
- 3.**A global community of practice dedicated for the advancement of play-based peace education and decolonization of peacebuilding, connecting the TNFSA and local peacebuilders

Impact

When given the opportunity to be in community with each other, we hope to expand and deepen critical reflections, shared responsibility, and transformative actions into a curriculum that supports Global South peacebuilder leaders and practitioners. We aim that our contributions that are anchored in the Global South may support the exploration of decentralized, non-Eurocentric, and non-Westernized approaches, which are aligned with SDG Goal 4 and 16. By utilizing alternative approaches to learning centered around the Power of Play, we will empower methodologies where education for peacebuilding becomes more relatable, empowering, and fun for learning communities. Further, we hope to create a continuous impact in this realm by building communities of practice connecting local peacebuilders and TNFSA communities of learning.

Risks

1.Adaptability across diverse contexts. Given the curriculum guidebook will coalesce learnings from a diverse range of contexts, there may be challenges in implementing these approaches in new contexts. We are confident that our piloting, monitoring, and evaluation work will mitigate this risk and help us deliver an output that is widely usable by practitioners worldwide.

2.Resistance from traditional peacebuilding organizations. Practitioners may resist our curriculum due to their adherence to traditional approaches, but to mitigate this risk, we have conducted rigorous research on the pedagogical effectiveness of play- and art-based curricula to gain early buy-in.

3.Challenges with existing commitments: As this work is already connected to our professional work engagement and interests, there is minimum impact to get hindered by those work commitments.

Post-project Vision/Next Steps

1.We hope to organize a capacity-sharing event for the fellows in our learning communities with TNFSA and Salzburg Global Seminar.

2.Local implementations in additional communities of practice, especially Nepal, Indonesia, and Cambodia as they are co-creators of the curriculum.

3.Co-authoring an academic publication on this intervention and its findings.

4.Further improving the curriculum and learning tools and submitting for institutional accreditation.

5.Sustaining the community of practice for play-based peacebuilding and learning with global communities of practice.